

SONGS OF A CAMPAIGN

SONGS OF A CAMPAIGN

By LEON GELLERT

Third and Enlarged Edition
With Pictures by Norman Lindsay

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With Acknowledgments
to
MISS E MILNE BUNDEY, Mus. Bac.

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THE DREAMS OF MARS

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THE RETIREMENT OF MARS

HE pauses on his way, and gazing back
Across the desert ways of splintered steel
Recalls the noon, and sees his weary track,
And sees the bloody imprints of his heel.
A Mars long tired he stands—a noble Mars!
Stiff with the staggering day, and fields hard won.
His bruised helm is glittering with scars
That gleam afar and spy the setting sun.
With red plumes doffed and foe-revering face
He moves adroop, to seek the sea, the waves,
To seek the sighing winds, the shades of space,
And rest his heart within the Twilight Caves.
The dazzling axe is deep, its lord abed.
The dead are lying with the friendly dead!



EASE. 1914

THE iron is hidden in forgetfulness.
A smoothness comes to men and lies on lands.
Women of peace arise in lusted dress,
And hold aloft their sleek and perfect hands.
The birds are in the morn, the bees in noon.
The eve has song and sleep and slow repose.
A lazy Ease treads soft in feathered shoon
That leave no sign to show the way she goes.
Soft cheeks there are; and Guile with coiling hair
Smiles at the earth and croons within her chair.
The slow leaves fall, and rustling Night begins
Her reign of furriness. The slinking feet
Of half-seen things and thoughts bring brushing
sins
And warmths of fog that touch a smouldering heat.



THE MOVING OF THE SHADES

THE black revolving depths have moved and
stirred

With news. Their Lord has cried, 'Send these,
and these'

Swift feet awake. Shapes speed. The dreadful
word

Resounds along the tunnels of the seas.

Sly Falsehood comes, with Sin, and Flattery,

And long-toothed Fear runs shrieking by the
wall.

Face-hidden Sorrow follows Cruelty,

And peering Jealousy grown over-tall.

Slobbering Lust is there, asmeared with slime,

And Vice's ushers from the Uttermost;

Comes painted Pleasure, somewhat fat with time;

And Murder takes his place amid the host.

Thronewards they stand and gaze. The Foul Voice
screams,

'Invoke this God! Go hand in hand with dreams!'



THE ADVICE OF TREACHERY

THIS well-feigned trance, this still and
stupored sleep
Is aptly timed, and nobly fits the scheme.
The cloud-encircled Sword with Night may creep
Beside the gates, and catch the world adream,
Snatching at life before the sluggish breath
Awakes to morning and to vultured death.
Till Craft appeared, the blunted Grecian spears
That scratched at Troy, and all the blistered
hands
That tore at stones and prayed upon the sands
Were weak and vain, and vain the bloody years
Oh, let the winds take up the heavy tones
Of sleeping. Move within a mist! Shun light!
Then swing the hidden weapon once, and smite,
And gaze with laughter on the slaughtered thrones'

THE CRY OF MAMMON

THE dazzling earth is rich with easy thrones.
The corn is golden in the golden sun.
The amber day is set with blazing stones,
And yellow kingdoms waiting to be won.
The ruby cries, "My lord, my lord, return!"
The emerald is greener than the trees
Of Proserpine: The bursting sapphires burn
In searching brilliance on the burnished seas.
The hall is empty of its rightful lord,
That lord that sleeps, and hugs his rusty sword.
Could he but step upon these coral lands,
And hurl his polished spear but once, and hold
The shining realm,—within his jewelled hands
Would lie the jewelled stars, and gold, and gold!

THE SPEECH OF FLATTERY

‘SEE how he lies, still mighty in his ease,
The fields’ huge fear, the terrifying saint;
And nothing needed but his straightened knees,
A polished helm,—perhaps a little paint.
His breast is broad, as when behind that shield
He thrust its front across the clanging line,
And stood with Gore, as trembling armies kneeled
To lay their carven trophies at his shrine.
And now the very gates would yield at sight,
The earth cry “Welcome,” and the maidens sing
“The day has come, at last, at last, the light!
Sick Peace is slain, and slaying War is king!”
Oh, even yet will Beauty yield to Might,
And deck his couch while Numa’s temples ring.’



MURDER

UPON the threshold, red-eyed Murder stands,
Fresh from his slaughter-house of human meat.
Blood on his broken teeth and on his hands,

Blood on his nails and on his purple feet.
With hollow voice he speaks, and sick'ning breath,
'A way there is, that only way is death! . . .

The dead will rise no more,—the dead are dead!

The spared will creep behind the sparer's back,
And breathe their plots and stab. The dead are
dead!

And lie along the safe triumphal track.
The young-eyed babe will lisp its little tales.

The loving girl will slay her man in bed
Kissing his savage mouth. The victor fails
At Mercy's seat. The dead are safely dead.'



THE INVOCATION OF JEALOUSY

'THE conquered world is bowed and wor-
shipful,
And lovely Peace smooth-gowned in lightest
grey

Cries, "War is dead," and treads upon his skull.

While silken women walk their rosy way
Sneering at swords, and tittering at deeds,
And kicking relics with their pearl-shod feet,
Saying with mirth, "The body never bleeds.
Old Mars is corpsed beneath great Bacchus'
seat."

Young mothers tell their babes of rusted spears,
Of timid wolves, long fled to northern skies,
Of priests that sang of March in olden years,
And died in May with vain, despairing eyes.
The world is soothed with olive-juice and wine,
And spits upon the Quirinalian shrine.'



THE INFLUENCE OF LUST

WITH padded feet from out his own dark den
Comes smiling Lust, once fair and hard to
please,

But now long overworked with dabbling men,
Who cry, 'We've tasted this, and tire of these.'
Pausing in doubt, suspecting some defence,
He stares with eyes blue-lidded, at the Shape,
Then stooping, whispers low of innocence,
Of waiting chastity and sweetest rape.
With hairless hands awave, lips reeking tales
'Mid smothered sighs, aquivering the while
He sees a horrified frown and fears he fails,
But smiling much whene'er he sees a smile.
Then pressing, 'Flesh is this, thy needed food,'
And, 'Flesh is warmest in its stolen blood.'



THE COMING OF WAR. 1915

STRONG from the hills it comes, and flowing
rivers;

Swift from the waters of the rising seas;
Swift on the chilling heart that waits and quivers
With a terror of its hideousies.

Behind grey mist it comes, and creeping cloud -

That licks the fading earth with foetid breath.
From plains it comes, and silent lakes—a shroud

That holds unloosed the damned brigades of
death.

It sweeps and passes. Everything is dead—
Broken with foulness—ravished as it bled!

A blow, a weeping! Then a silence lies.
Faint bells low-tinkling from the bloody sod

Rise from the depth of heart, and touch the skies.
And murmur at the very stairs of God.



THE TRUMPETS OF HEAVEN. 1916

A SILVER cry is calling from a height
Leaving the awful pause that follows song,
And through the silence shines a stretching light—
A stretching light that quietly runs along
The path of stars, and pierces cloud on cloud.
Pure things in space across the guiltless sky
Rustle with wings, that bear in flight the proud
Revenge of God, with God's intensity.
Among the lighted ways—to move unheard,—
A great unseen assembly seems to shine
To gather silently in line on line,
And wait and wait for some expected word.
A call on the height! And from the blinding skies
Come white battalions with their blinding eyes.

THE EDGE OF THE DESERT

THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

THOU gazing face above the shifting sands!
Oh, turn thy tearless eyes and answer me!
Will honour come to thee and to thy land,
That this should be?

Those swarthy adamantine breasts of stone
Are now matured beneath thine Egypt sun.
Wilt profit by this brood of iron bone
That this be done?

Oh, answer me, thou silent gazing face,
All-gifted with the wisdom of the years.
These teeth of Jason,—will they bring thee grace,
Or bring thee tears?

December, 1914

THE SONG'S END

WHERE will the song end? Here?
Here by the stretching arc
Red-rimmed and clear?
Or there in the dark?
Where will the song end?
Here, where the lizard sticks its tongue
Into the wide air?
Or there with a friend?
Where will the last note be sung?
Here, or there?

How will the song end? High?
High with a fighting ring
Through the wild sky
Re-echoing?
How will the tune cease?
Slow-droned beneath a quiet heaven?
With a dead foe?
Or 'mid bells of peace?
How will the last note be given?
High, or low?

Egypt, 1915

DREAMLIGHT

OH, I am lonely by a desert palm,
And dreaming, dreaming on the sands of
thought.

Oh, come to me from out the voiceless calm,
And teach me what the Nile has left untaught.

Bring to me a draught of Southern wine,
The perfume of the near-forgotten rose.
Then let me drink beside some ancient shrine,
And drinking, let my tired eyelids close.

Come near to me. The fast night-hours are few,
For every hour is fast when moons are clear.
Scatter from my hair the desert dew,
And lilt sweet Arab love-songs in my ear.

Unloose thy twilight hair about thy head,
And listen to the waters deep and slow,
For we are dreaming with the dreaming dead,
Dreaming where the flowers of Isis blow.

Look not to where those eagles fiercely fight,
Let peace alone be on this ancient bed.
Unbare thy beauty to the Egypt night,
And stay with me till Egypt's dawn is red.

Then leave me when the bird of night has flown,
And touch my lips before the night-moon sinks.
I'll ponder by these pyramids of stone,
And sit within the shadow of the Sphinx.

January, 1915

A SONG

THE night has come. I feel the desert dew.
I lie in Afric's sands
And breathe the night, for nights like these are few
In other lands;
But where are you?

May sleep come soon. I see old shadows creep
Along the sleepy stream.
The darkness 'mid the talking palms is deep.
I can but dream.
Are *you* asleep?

January, 1915

A MILITARY CAMP IN EGYPT

THE moving hours move slowly by the palms.
The lazy Nile laps softly as it flows.
An Arab girl, a flagon in her arms,
Slowly fills it and as slowly goes.
The sun sets scarlet on the desert arch
And lets the moon creep out with quiet grace;
He goes to watch the tramping armies march
And rise again with blood smeared on his face.

.

A noisy band breaks sudden on the air,
And twinkling light confides with twinkling light;
A drunken song is blared forth here and there.
Should this be Egypt? this be Egypt's night?
The riddle of the ancient Sphinx is dead,
And Wisdom, head-bowed, slowly creeps to bed

December, 1914

‘IF YOU WERE HERE’

(OVERLOOKING THE VALLEY OF THE NILE)

If you were here
These long grey fields of space
So quaint and yet so drear,
Stagnant with age, yet green with corn and palms,
Would have new grace.
Could I but hear your voice and feel your arms
The glory of the Egypt dawn would seem
More grand, more clear;
An ecstasy unrivalled in the wildest dream,
If you were here.

January, 1915

SONGS OF THE EXPEDITION

1915



THE OLD AND THE NEW

MARS! Mars!
Thy clashing sword was keen
And glittering with stars.
Thine armour sheen
Shone to the terrored sky,
And o'er the bodies of thy foes
With open blows
Didst step to victory.

War! War!
Thy hidden horrors sound
And echo from afar.
Upon the ground
Thou liest now in fear
To wait the cunning chance
To thrust thy lance,
And hurl thy poisoned spear.



DREAMS OF FRANCE

O H, dreams of France! Oh, faded dreams of France!

Oh, France, that I had ever dreamed of thee!
I thought to help thee bear thy brandished lance,
But, lo, I sail the blue Aegean sea!
Sweet thoughts of thee still stand before mine eyes,
While I lie fettered in this stagnant cage;
Unseen by me the golden Grecian skies,
Forgotten is the Grecian Golden Age.
Drear and dank this stale Ionian bark,
That plods its path along Aegean ways.
Could I but see old Homer, tall and dark,
And hear the battle-laughter of his lays!
Farewell, oh France! Farewell, thou tortured
West!
Bear strong thy shield above thine outraged breast.

February, 1915

ARMAGEDDON

THE world rolls wet with blood,
And the skinny hand of Death
Gropes at the beating heart.
The salt tears well, and flood
With strife the choking breath,
And nations sway and part.
The scythe of Time runs red,
Red with the bleeding year.
Sound is but a knell,
And Sleep has a scarlet bed.
Dreams are wet with Fear,
And Honour sits in Hell.

1915

THROUGH A PORTHOLE

IF you could lie upon this berth, this berth
whereon I lie,

If you could see a tiny peak uplift its tingèd
tusk,

If you could see the purple hills against the chang-
ing sky,

And see a shadowed pinnace lying in the dusk;

If you could see the sabre-moon shining on the
deep:

You'd say the world was not unkind, but just
a sleeping child,

You'd say the world had gone to sleep,

And while it slept

It smiled.

March, 1915

LEMNOS HARBOUR

THE island sleeps,—but it has no delight
For me, to whom that sleep has been unkind.
My thoughts are long of what seems long ago,
And long, too, are my dreams. I do not know
These trailing glories of the star-strewn night
Or the slow sough of the wind.

I hear the rattle of the moving car;
The children crying in the lighted street.
I walk along the same old asphalt way.
I see the church,—I hear the organ play.
I see the hills I wandered on afar,
And spots of rain at my feet.

I see the dust-strewn hedge,—the latchèd gate;
The gravelled path with roses either side;
The cedar tree,—the lawn where I have lain;
The pots of fern,—my mother's window pane.
I see the place where I sat long and late
By the trellis deep and wide.

'The red Virginia crumbles at the wall.
'The bed is bare where winter's snow-drops grew.

I feel my dog come licking at my hand.
I pause awhile beside the door. I stand
And hear the well-known footsteps softly fall
And the voices that I knew.

I slowly creep and peep beneath the blind.
—My father reads his book within his chair.
Some children play their game of dominoes.
My mother sits beside the fire and sews;
Her head is bowed. I know her eyes are kind
By the grey lines in her hair.

I tap the pane to see those tears unshed.
I see all turn, and watch them sadly stirred
By the sound, and peer to see my face without.
They see, and smile. I hear no welcome shout.
They sit and gaze as they that see the dead,
But no one says a word.

The island sleeps. May sleep come soon to me,
And lull these dreams within my shaken mind;
—These dreams that tell me I have seen the last
Of those I left so,—loved so in the past.

.

I hear the murmur of the moving sea,
And the murmur of the wind.

March, 1915

LEMNOS VISITED

O H, Peace! the Peace I knew. I thought thee dead!

And had not hoped again to see thy smile.
I deemed thee dead, but thou hadst only fled,
And hid thy face within a Grecian isle.

The sun that rises in the early morn

Now gilds these purple hills with golden light.
This land of Lemnos hath not felt the thorn
Of thoughtless war. It hath a calm delight

In waving fields, a lazy grinding mill,
In winding shores, a drowsy lapping sea;
A humble church upon a dreaming hill;

A sleeping silence and a home for thee.
But let us not molest thy bloodless reign,
Lest fields of flowers change to fields of pain.

March, 1915

LEMNOS REVISITED

LEMNOS! Lemnos! 'Thine enfolding arms
Have held too much. Thy patterned hills are
shorn

Of all their one-time freshness. Loud alarms
' And trampling tread have left thee stained and
torn.

Oh, gone those bleating lambs! Those grinding
mills!

Those smiles of peace that were thy constant joy.
Hast gathered to thyself too much those ills

And pains smoke-fouled from off the plain of
Troy,

Which, bruised and bloody in its modernness,

And wet with tears as those Achilles shed
For Patroclus, has soiled thy loveliness,

And housed thy bosom with its weary dead.

Lemnos! there are those who still can trace
Soft lines of beauty on thy dusty face.

August, 1915

THE THREE CONCERNED

THE MAN

HE lies forgotten 'neath the watching skies,
The blood upon his bayonet scarlet bright;
The red moon shining in his glazed eyes,
The 'Last Post' crying, crying in the night.

THE WOMAN

She proudly sits within her home of gloom.
And reads and reads his lines with wistful smile,
Then, eyes aglisten, seeks the empty room
(And he within his bloody grave the while.)

THE CHILD

His wooden war-horse stands beside his bed,
His tiny pillow holds a head of gold.
He dreams of all the things his father said,
He dreams of all the tales his father told.

February, 1915



AGAIN THE CLASH IS EAST

A GAIN the clash is East, the Gates are barred.
The rolling echoes of old Troy arise
With trebled sound : its weary threshold scarred
With scattered dead once more, and wild with
cries.

The noise that dinned when smiting Hellas reeled
Before the brave defence of Hector's horde,
The blows that burst on Agamemnon's shield,
Or echoed from Achilles' threshing sword
Were weak and small. Before this mighty blast
They seem the tinklings of a timid past.
To-day the Grecian arms are still and deep
Within the tomb : those heroes deep in dust ;
The eyes of Attic honour closed with sleep,
And wise Ulysses' arrows red with rust.

April 28, 1915

RED

PLACE that bayonet in my hand,
And fill this pouch with lead;
Show me that blood and leave me, and let me
stand

By my dead.

Cover those staring eyes and go
And stab in the red, red rain.
Show me that blood and leave me. They groan
in the snow
With the pain.

Cover his head with a scarlet cloak,
And run to your scarlet strife.
Show me that blood and leave me, where white
snows choke
Out the life.

Turn his face to the sanguine skies,
The skies where the red stars move.
Show me that blood and leave me; a dead man lies
With his love.

February, 1915

BEFORE ACTION

WE always had to do our work at night.
I wondered why we had to be so sly. •
I wondered why we couldn't have our fight
Under the open sky.

I wondered why I always felt so cold.
I wondered why the orders seemed so slow,
So slow to come, so whisperingly told,
So whisperingly low

I wondered if my packing-straps were tight,
And wondered why I wondered Sound
went wild
An order came I ran into the night,
Wondering why I smiled.

May, 1915

NOW 'NEATH THE COOL STARS

NOW 'neath the cool stars
I know thee more.
Here where the world wars
By the winding shore.

Here by the whirling shell
I know thee most;
Here where a thousand fell
On a battered coast.

Strong 'mid the battle-smoke
I hold more dear
Those soft words you spoke
To a foolish ear.

Dead, where the hill dips
I lie more wise,
Dreaming of red lips
And crying eyes.

THE DEATH

I'M hit. It's come at last. I feel a smart
Of needles in My God I'm hit again!
No pain this time no pain and yet
my heart

• Where is my heart? 'Tis strange I feel no pain.
The night is still, the night is very still.

I feel the April rain upon my hair.
I see the lights upon the yonder hill
Agleam and shining in the silent air.

How soft the grasses seem—how soft and cool!

How long the valley looks—how long and deep!
How warm the rain! I feel a little pool

Beside my hand. I feel Can this be sleep?
Can this be sleep this buzzing in my head?
Good God! A light! A light! The pool! I'm***

June, 1915

THE BURIAL

IN MEMORY OF W. I. R.

WHAT task is this that so unnerves me now?
When pity should be dead, and has been
dead.

Unloose that sheet from round the piercèd brow;
What matter blood is seen, for blood is red,
And red's the colour of the clammy earth.

Be not so solemn,—There's no need to pray;
But rather smile,—yea, laugh! If pure, thy mirth
Is right. He laughed himself but yesterday.

That pay-book? Take it from him. Ours a debt
No gold can ever pay. That cross of wood
About his neck? That must remain, and yet

He needs it not, because his heart was good.
We'll house him 'neath these broken shrubs; dig
deep.

He's tired, God knows, and needs a little sleep.

May, 1915

A NIGHT ATTACK

BE still. The bleeding night is in suspense
Of watchful agony and coloured thought,
And every beating vein and trembling sense,
Long-tired with time, is pitched and overwrought.
And for the eye, the darkness holds strange forms,
Soft movements in the leaves, and wicked glows
That wait and peer. The whole black landscape
 swarms

With shapes of white and grey that no one knows;
And for the ear, a sound, a pause, a breath,
A distant hurried footstep moving fast.
The hand has touched the slimy face of death.
The mind is raking at the ragged past.
. . . . A sound of rifles rattles from the south,
And startled orders move from mouth to mouth.

May 24, 1915

THE GREY WORLD

GREY nights in the wind,
And the grey-faced dead.
Grey hairs in my head,
And grey eyes in my mind.

Grey mists in the morn,
And grey waves that rave.
Grey mould on my grave,
And grey eyes forlorn.

Grey clouds in the sky,
And the grey world asleep.
Grey ghosts that sigh,
And grey eyes that weep.

June, 1915

ONE WHO DIED

IN MEMORY OF E.W.T.S.

I MIND they told me on a noisy hill.
I sat and disbelieved, and shook my head:
'Impossible! Impossible! But still
These other men have died, and others bled.'
Knees clasped, I sat and thought, unheeding war.
The trees, the winds, the streets came back to me;
The laughter of his eyes, his home afar,
The memory of his hopes, his buoyancy,
His dreams, his jests, his moods of wistfulness,
The quaintness of his speech, his favourite song;
And this,—and this the end so pitiless!
The man we knew! The man we knew so long!
—To die—he dead—not move,—and this was he!
I rose and oiled my rifle musingly.

May, 1915

THE SOLDIER

HERE in the noisy night
Is his delight.
Where maxims pour
Their thudding lead
Upon the ground
And on the shore.
He revels in the sound,
And lies among the dead.
Here where the sniper lies
Beneath the skies
In hungry wait;
And gasping shells
Disgorge red death.
This is his fate:
To love war's rhythmic breath,
And war's discordant knells.
Here on the parapet
His foes he met.
See where they sleep
In battered lines.
Here lies his bed
So long and deep,
And on his broken head
A shaft from Heaven shines.

IN THE TRENCH

EVERY night I sleep,
And every night I dream
That I'm strolling with my sheep
By the old stream.

Every morn I wake,
And every morn I stand
And watch the shrapnel break
On the smashed land.

Some night I'll fall asleep,
And will not wake at dawn.
I'll lie and feed my sheep
On a green Lawn.

May, 1915



THESE MEN

MEN moving in a trench, in the clear noon,
Whetting their steel within the crumbling
earth;

Men, moving in a trench 'neath a new moon
That smiles with a slit mouth and has no mirth;
Men moving in a trench in the grey morn,
Lifting bodies on their clotted frames;
Men with narrow mouths thin-carved in scorn
That twist and fumble strangely at dead names.

.

These men know life—know death a little more.
These men see paths and ends, and see
Beyond some swinging open door
Into eternity.

July, 1915

THE TEACHER

A CROSS is slanting 'tween two withered trees.

.

I saw him first in peace, amid a crowd
Of streets, nor dreamed him ever one of these,
So wistfully he mused, so shyly proud,
So chalk-besmeared he walked his weary pace.
A space went,—and on an early day
Within the trench, I saw a half-known face
Awake with wonder; a child-lived heart at play
With dreamed romance; a Drake-keen eye ashine
For newer worlds A thunder tore the line!
A shell burst! He smiled as Sidney smiled—
And fell. . . . There came the crying of a child,
. . . . A wave of little hands a soft breeze.

.

The cross is slanting 'tween two withered trees.

THE DIGGERS

THE diggers are digging, and digging deep,
They're digging and singing,
And I'm asleep.

They're digging and singing, and swiftly they're
swinging

• The flying earth as it falls in a heap.

And some of it scatters and falls on my head;

But the diggers dig on. They can only dig.

They can only sing, and their eyes are big.

Their eyes are big and heavy as lead.

They dig and they sing and they think I'm dead.

The diggers are digging, and filling the hole.

They're sighing and sighing.

They pray for my soul.

I hear what they say, and from where I am
lying,

I hear a new corporal calling the roll.

But the diggers dig on and fill in my bed.

The diggers dig on, and they sweat and they
sweat.

They sigh and they sigh, and their eyes are wet.

The brown earth clatters and covers my head;

Then I laugh and I laugh, for they think I'm dead.

July, 1915

THE WRECKED AEROPLANE

UNHAPPY craft of Daedalus reborn,
That liest prone with white wings torn,
And, like some giant prehistoric bird, with throbbing sound
Dost beat thy wings on unresponsive ground.
Forlorn! Forlorn!

This very morn didst set out with thy plume
Yet damp from thine Icarian tomb,
To plough in mirth again the Stygian wave. With
launching cry
And sails outset didst dive the unattempted sky
To doom! To doom!

The early reaper at the start of day
Pauses 'mid the falling hay,
And stands in wond'ring gaze, with eyes upturned
to watch thy flight;
To him dost seem some goblin that the lifting night
Hath cast astray.

About thee in thy meteor flight along
The shore, the shrieking sea birds throng

In clustered clouds of angry rivalry, and skim the
 sea

To rise and dip again, and follow with their free
 Wild tuneless song.

Unfledged, untimely birdling of a breath!

No useless shroud hast thou, nor wreath.

Thy flight was brief, yet wert thou eagle-hearted
 as of yore,

When fearlessly didst flee that alien Crétan shore
 To sink in death.

And now the furrowed earth holds fast thy wings,
While far afield the ox-bell rings

A strange, soft dirge. Thy blood is dropping on
 the frightened grass;

The night is hushed. A sad, scarce-moving breeze
 doth pass,

 And passing sings.



THE JESTER IN THE TRENCH

‘**T**HAT just reminds me of a yarn,’ he said;
And everybody turned to hear his tale.
He had a thousand yarns inside his head.

They waited for him, ready with their mirth
And creeping smiles,—then suddenly turned pale,
Grew still, and gazed upon the earth.

They heard no tale. No further word was said.
And with his untold fun,
Half leaning on his gun,
They left him—dead.

ANZAC COVE

THERE'S a lonely stretch of hillocks:
There's a beach asleep and drear:
There's a battered broken fort beside the sea.
There are sunken trampled graves:
And a little rotting pier:
And winding paths that wind unceasingly.

There's a torn and silent valley:
There's a tiny rivulet
With some blood upon the stones beside its
mouth.
There are lines of buried bones:
There's an unpaid waiting debt:
There's a sound of gentle sobbing in the South.

January, 1916

WAR!

WHEN my poor body died,—Alas!
I watched it topple down a hill
And sink beside a tuft of grass.
. . . . I laughed like mad,
. . . . And laughing still
I bowed and thanked the bit of shell
That set me free and made me glad.
Then, quietly,
I strolled to Hell.

April, 1917



Alfredman LEBIAN

SIGHTS

- I** SAW a singer singing to a crowd,—
Singing of laughing life,—and all the while
He sang in tones so shrilly loud,
• Not one man had a smile.

I saw a fiddler from a broken plain
Playing his weeping fiddle,—sweet and clear.
He sang of Death, and Cries, and Pain,—
But no one shed a tear.

I saw a whistling soldier, still and wan,
Firing his rifle from a fearful place,—
But all the time a dying man
Looked long upon his face.

November, 1916

THE ATTACK AT DAWN

‘**A**T every cost,’ they said, ‘it must be done.’
They told us in the early afternoon.
We sit and wait the coming of the sun.
We sit in groups,—grey groups that watch the
moon.

We stretch our legs and murmur half in sleep,
And touch the tips of bayonets and yawn.
Our hands are cold. They strangely grope and
creep,
Tugging at ends of straps. We wait the dawn!

Some men come stumbling past in single file.
And scrape the trench’s side and scatter sand.
They trip and curse and go. Perhaps we smile.
We wait the dawn! . . . The dawn is close at
hand!

A gentle rustling runs along the line.
‘At every cost,’ they said, ‘it must be done.’
A hundred eyes are staring for the sign.
It’s coming! Look! . . . Our God’s own
laughing sun!

THE BROTHERS

DO you remember how we crept
Across our bedroom to our bed,
Fearing the dark? And how you wept?
And on a sudden lay like lead?
And how I feared that you were dead,
But heard you breathing as you slept?

And now we're buried, buried deep,
And lie in silence head by head.
I neither hear you breathe nor weep.
We lie together in our bed.
I do not fear that you are dead.
I know that you are fast asleep.

January, 1917

THE CROSS

I WEAR a cross of bronze,' he said,
 'And men have told me I was brave.'
He turned his head,
 And, pointing to a grave,
'They told me that my work of war was done.
 His fierce mouth set.
 'And yet, and yet'
 He trembled where he stood.
 'And yet, and yet'
I have not won
 That broken cross of wood!'

May, 1915

TO A MAN WHO WISHED TO DIE

AND now that you are dead,-- If I should die
Upon this ground,
And open my new eye,
I'd leave my body dead,
Just like a garment shed
Without a sound;

And go to you within that dingy room
Above the stair,
To find you in the gloom,
As though you sadly dozed,
With dead eyes partly closed,
Within your chair.

Then would I find you sad, who used to weep
At Death's delay;
And I would notice creep
Upon your cheek a tear
At finding Heaven so near,
And Earth so far away.

July, 1915

POPPIES

SOME scarlet poppies lay upon our right.
He watched them through his periscope all day.
He watched them all the day; but in the night
They seemed to pass away.

They came again much redder with the morn;
And still he gazed, and strangely longed to roam
Among their savage splendour in the corn,
And ponder on his home.

But when the charge was done, they found him
there
Deep in the redness, where he made his stand,
With withered poppies in his twisted hair,
And poppies in his hand.

May, 1915

THE LAST TO LEAVE

THE guns were silent, and the silent hills
Had bowed their grasses to a gentle breeze.
I gazed upon the vales and on the rills,
And whispered, 'What of these?' and 'What
of these?'
'These long-forgotten dead with sunken graves,
Some crossless, with unwritten memories;
'Their only mourners are the moaning waves;
'Their only minstrels are the singing trees.'
And thus I mused and sorrowed wistfully.
I watched the place where they had scaled
the height,
That height whereon they bled so bitterly
Throughout each day and through each blis-
tered night.
I sat there long, and listened—all things listened
too.
I heard the epics of a thousand trees;
A thousand waves I heard, and then I knew
The waves were very old, the trees were wise:
The dead would be remembered evermore—
The valiant dead that gazed upon the skies,
And slept in great battalions by the shore.

January, 1916

SONGS OF THE SICK

THE DEAD

THESE there were, who lost their everything.
Gave all! and left the earth a vaster sphere
In memories: a song or two to sing,
• Some tales to tell, some thoughts to think,
more near
To humanness by death, and blood of death
Than life itself, which in the passing hence
Enriched the world with an awakened breath,
And fled no longer nameless from the sense.
'Twas not the shed of blood, but fearless mirth
That set a wondrous pattern to the earth.
And these,—within a corner that is theirs,
Are laid in smiling peace—a rich content.
The pain has been—the glory is. Old cares
Have dropped, and left no drooping wonder-
ment.

September, 1915

THE CONSUMPTIVE

THE stars, the fields, will know him never-
more;

His friends, his trees, the restless swerving sea.
'Three days to live,' they said—the kind gave four.

They glide about his bedside silently.

'Twas not the lead of battle nor the shell,

The spitting Maxim's basiliskine breath—

'Twas through the falseness of the winds he fell;

The snow's mock-warmth—a chill. His humble
death

Will ne'er be sung in elegy and rhyme.

His passage bloodless was, unstained and still.
It brought no stir; and smiling all the time

He waved his last farewell behind the Hill.

I saw him die with my half-closed eyes,
And closing them I thought of Paradise.

November, 1915

THE EPILEPTIC

HIS splendid heart is set within a frame
Of manly massiveness, and giant limbs.
And strong to move, he helps the maimed and
lame,

While in his pride of strength the laughter brims
His eyes and spreads. He heaves his mighty chest
In mirth at every feeble joke and jest.

But sometimes in the height of joy he'll start
Pale-checked, as though within his ear he heard
Some shocking whisper calling at his heart,
And knew the call, and trembled at its word.

And so he passes into horridness,
Within the claw of some hot fiend of prey,
And fights with blinded hands and pitiless,
Till back again he lisps his dreary way.

February, 1916



THE BLIND MAN

WITHIN a corner of this windowed room
He sits, and seldom speaks, and seldom
moves.

Forever left within eternal gloom,

He thinks of those he left, and those he loves.

The clouds were his, the colours of the day,

The purple mists, the deepest shades of blue,

The yellow flames, the stars, the milky way,

And smiles, and frowns, and stretching moon-
light, too.

He knew the sun upon the eastern sea,

And watched it set behind a western hill.

He saw the depth of waters,—space,—the free

Ascent of birds. All these he knew until

The bursting shell. And now, as life is long,

He sits alone, and whistles some old song.

November, 1916

THE CRIPPLE

HE totters round and dangles those odd shapes
That were his legs. His eyes are never dim.
He brags about his fame between the tapes,
And laughs the loudest when they laugh at him.
Amid the fights of snow he takes a hand;
Accepts his small defeats, and with a smile
He rises from the ground, and makes his stand
With clumsiness, but battles hard the while.
So quick to see the pain in fellow men,
He chides them; yea,—and laughs them into
youth:
And yet, when death was near to one, 'twas then
About his kindly heart we learnt the truth.
Since nowadays of cheer there is a dearth,
'Twas smiles or tears, and so he chose the mirth.

January, 1916

A BOOK OF WORDSWORTH

THY talks on God, and glories of His fields
Are woven into my unworthy past.
The fragments of thy thoughts my memory yields
Grow dim at times, and yet they seem to last.
This little book of verses, covered red,
A gift to me, a gift of quiet rest,
Is filled with soothing words that thou hast said:
Some chosen thoughts, the wisest and the best;—
Sweet songs and gleanings from that inward eye;
The noise of bees, the wind in daffodils;
The splendour of the sea and of the sky;
And Nature standing on the silent hills.
Thy words, thy thoughts, for me can never cease
To have that flavour of eternal peace.

Hospital Ghain Tuffeiha, Malta,
August, 1915

BLIND!

A RED-ROOFED house is shining to the
skies:

A house red-roofed and brilliant in the wind:
A house of colour filled with wandering eyes:
And all the eyes are blind.

A gentle sound of moving fills each room:
A sound of hands,—dumb hands that touch
and pry:
A sound of fingers feeling in a tomb
Before they close and die.

A hundred windows face long rows of flowers—
Long rows of flowers, and flowers that sway
and dance
Where lidded eyes can gaze for hours and hours;
Blue eyes that shut in France

The Hospital for the Blind,
December 25, 1915

THE DREAMER

HE lay within a neat white-sheeted bed,
And stared at distance with his wide young
eyes:—

Eyes that held space, had dreams, and saw the
spread

Of the huge seas, and saw the stretch of skies:

Watched streets and roofs, and clouds, and quiet
rains:—

Eyes that knew the way each slow wind flies

Through long green lengths of winding coun-
try lanes:—

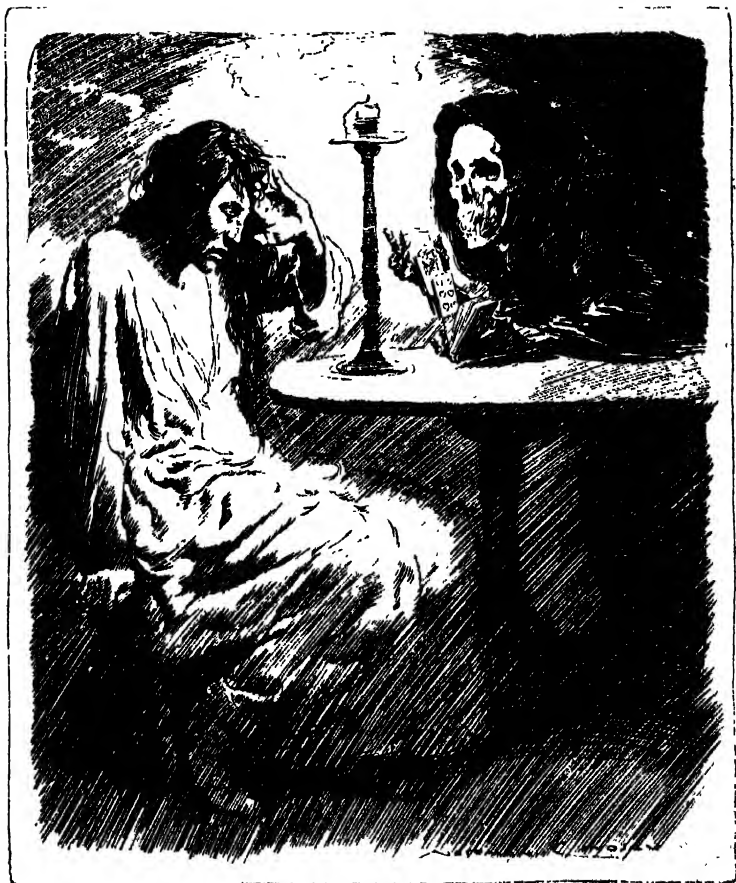
Eyes that held time, and saw all unafraid

Each passing hour

Fall like a sleeping flower

Against a narrow blade.

Written in Hospital,
England, 1915



PATIENCE

RED! red! red!
Is there no black?

Red like the bloody earth, this pack!
Knaves! Kings! Queens!—all red!

Where are the black?
Shuffle again!

Will not the other cards come back?
The only cards to clear the brain!

Dear God, 'twill crack!
Shuffle again!
Red! red! red!

Black! black! black!

Is there no red?
Has all the blood on earth been shed?
Each Queen! Each King! And every Jack!
Where are the red?

Shuffle again!
Has blood within the world all bled?
The millions mourning for the slain?

The million dead?
Shuffle again!
Black! black! black!

Malta,
August, 1915

FEVER!

EVERYTHING seems lost and gone.
The world seems void; and I alone
To mourn its emptiness, that am too weak to
mourn:
To mope a hermit in a broken cave
Imprisoned and forlorn.
The youthful wave that dashes on the outside
shore,
And splits youth's passions on the moveless stones,
Has failed to stir the blood that fills
The warrior heart. I only see the bleaching bones,
The narrow graves upon the gouged hills,
And mope the more.
How can the 'prisoned bird surmise
The passages on outer air?
Or sing of Freedom to the lonely skies
When Freedom is not there?
What use is it to try high Fancy's flight
Above the upper blue?
The dark soul is darker than the night,
And Fancy's caged too.
To introspect, look inward on the mind,
Is gazing on a thing all bloody and unclean:

'Twere better that the soul were bright, the gazer
blind:

The beauty there, and yet no beauty seen.
The haunting questions of the bruised brain
Tease at the tired heart:

'Do tattered hills still bear unburied slain?
• And the far-off tear-drops start?
Is blood still wet upon the trees?
Upon the grass?

Do dead grey eyes dim-glazing in the breeze
Still stare upon the stumblers as they pass?'
The long, long dreams that loiter in the stay
Of sleep, and hold the mind clutched fast,
Have left it trembling at the day

With trailing memories of the cruel past
'How may the weary day be spent?—The weary
week?

Choose thoughts! Choose dreams! What choice?'
The long mute inward voice
Forgets to speak!

The ears are deaf; the eyes to beauty blind.
Unheeded are the laughing fields afar;
The glory of the wheeling western wind;
The shivering star.

The fault! lies that with fate? or with the age?
The singing poet within his Isles of Peace
Is glad! The sage

Upon his mountain height! But running blood
can't cease
For him who fights—till death:
Till smiling lips, besmeared and red with foam,
Move faintly with a feeble breath
In words of home.
'Tis sad! But still 'tis rest!
And what to show?
—A small black wound upon a dauntless breast;
True heart, and conscience as the snow.
And he who knows—has fought—has seen,
And now is caged without, yet hears the fight,
He wonders what is done, and thinks of what
has been;
He bears the burden of the dark, and cries for
light.
But he who prone with wounds and slow disease,
Too weak to grapple with the bars—
The bars that bind—encaged by the surrounding
seas
Can only gaze upon his scars.

Ghain Tuffeiha Hospital, Malta,
September, 1915

THE HOUSE DELIRIOUS

COME in and tread thou quietly.
Within the duskiness.
This twilight thou dost see
Is but the moment passing. Make no guess
Upon these ragged tapestries
Horrid with time
And stained with memories.
The undisturbèd grime
Of cryptic years
Conceals those happenings,
Unbrushed by recollection and unwashed by tears.
The music moans. It is the past that sings!

These corridors! These corridors and halls!
This change of light and gathered mystery;
These whisperings; this silent dust that palls
The buried gone are mine—a solemn property.

Here, with padded feet
Within the night
I move with muffled beat;
Head-bowed in shame at some foul sight;
Forever raking in some dim recess,
Peering at deeds and thought;

Grey things and dead;—a dreadfulness;
An ignorance; a bittered passage fraught
With dampnesses and sin
From some vile soakage. All alone
I pause at tombs where none must enter in,
And see my name deep-carved upon the stone.
Come in! Come in! If thou hast half a will
To stay and learn
This wilderness, be still
Thine asking tongue and follow me, nor turn
Upon thy track.
My rooms! My rooms!
My darling, hated rooms, so still, so sad!
How in my dreams the tall wall looms
And rises in threat! Mad! Mad!
Bestir thy limbs, and follow noiselessly,
This way! This way!
I hear the murmur of the outside sea,
And the coming of the day.

The yonder arches with their feeble strength
Have been my pride,
And when the length
Of this main hall has died
Within forgetfulness, will yet live long;
And those ambitious stairs in ruined disarray

May still be worthy of a song
At Judgment Day.
These avenues of searching youth
Wind on, and wind again.
They brought no treasure—just a truth,—
A knowing,—and with knowledge, pain.

Come thou with me!
Look not on here, and here!
But loiter now on this, my fondest memory,
My sweetest tear.
My fens! My fountains! And my singing birds!
And this? Aye, this was love.
Oh, what a place! Here rang those ardent words
Of youth to the wild sky above.
No roof impeded
The calling of her name.
No roof was needed;
No indiscretion here, no shame.
Often, often in the summer-still
Of night, I creep within the star-domed space,
And stand upon these stones until
She comes,—she always comes,—a smile upon
her face.
A smile—and yet—and yet—
I sometimes wish the soothing dust

Would sprinkle here, and I forget,
And all these golden railings mould in rust.
But still the playing waters rise and purl
A plaintive song,—singing to stars.
And all because a girl
Has come within the bars
Of an existence, painting all therein
With coloured melodies;
And quieting that sordid din
With witcheries.
These perfumed flowers here may never fade;
This passionate orchid, and that rose's folds;
Yon nodding violet within the shade;—
All bear eternal blossoming that memory holds.
Pass on, thou pleasant youth, thou canst not
linger long.
The tune has passed with Time, and left an
echoed song.

But now away, and keep apace with me!
Within this sorry vault, in slow decay,
My earthly store of learning lies all rottingly—
Disused and dusty—dustier every day.
This chest—unloose the lid—contains
The robes of life, the masks of mind,
Veneers and cloaks, asmeared with wanton stains

That Vice has left behind.
Uplift that shirt of mail that saved the soul
And guarded well the tender bud that grew,
And kept unsoiled the under-roll
Of white from crime it never knew.
I wore it constantly awhile;
But in a youthful rashness put it by,
And wore this undervest, and with a smile
Of doubtful bravery, stood naked to the sky.
Uphold the garment, once so white; that failed
To 'fend me from those evil things
That tore these holes with claws long-nailed,
And left it yellow with imaginings.
Gaze on the purple garment of conceit
Adorned with tattered trappings of a cheap
display!
'Tis meet! 'Tis meet!
The folly still outlives the fool's decay!

These rooms I know not! They are full of sleep,
And haunting shapes of dreams
That flicker silently, and creep
Within the darkness from the beams
Of our perception; time long-lost;
Dreams long-dreamed and never known;
Deeds of unthought cost;

Seeds, long sown;
Rooms of cloud and mistiness
Where lurking shadows wait;
Rooms of sorrowed shiftiness
Breathing opiate.

And so the structure stands, time-built of brain-
wrought stone,
Where I have wandered, and will wander yet
Until each bone
Of this frail body rots, the ruin falls, and I
forget.
But still I build each stone on rocking stone.
I have my plans—sometimes they fail. A Greater
Mind
Than mine has other plans. His Will be done
Until the last lone brick is lined
Upon the finished whole,
And through the trembling ether comes the calling
of the soul.

But go! 'Tis time! Within the tired mind
I feel the dawn,—and feel the morning wind!

Written on Hospital Ship.

AFTERWARDS

GOOD-BYE

W AFT on, thou upward breeze
From the warm south!
And on her wayward mouth
Imprint my far farewells
From these thy seas.
And calm her fears
By whispering in her ears
The sweetest tales that youthful summer tells.

Rush on, thou wintry wind
From the high north!
Thy mightiness put forth,
And hurl the feathered foam
Afar behind.
Then, with the cries
Of birds in windy skies,
Oh, bear me blithely to my southern home.

March, 1916

THE RETURN

I HAVE come home again!
Dawn is a dream to me
Lying here, soon to be
Clinging, awaking;
See where 'tis breaking
Mockingly, mistily!
I have come home again!

I have come home again!
Blithe is the day, and clear.
All of my youth is near.
Here with the sun above;
Here with my boyhood, love,
Joy, and a tear.
I have come home again!

I have come home again!
Grand is the night to-night.
Stars shed their brightest light;
Shine all their brightest fire;
Shine with their old desire;
Wild with delight!
I have come home again!

I must away again!
 Since I have lived this day
 Here, now I cannot stay.
Back with the changing sky,
I must away to 'die;
 Die in the proper way.
I must away again!

May, 1916

THE HUSBAND

YES, I have slain, and taken moving life
From bodies. Yea! And laughed upon the
taking;

And, having slain, have whetted still the knife
For more and more, and heeded not the making
Of things that I was killing. Such 'twas then!

But now the thirst so hideous has left me.
I live within a coolness, among calm men,
And yet am strange. A something has bereft me
Of a seeing, and strangely love returns;
And old desires half-known, and hanging
sorrows.

I seem agaze with wonder. Memory burns.
I see a thousand vague and sad to-morrows.
None sees my sadness. No one understands
How I must touch her hair with bloody hands.

February, 1916

THE VETERAN

HERE must I sit and stare,
Withered and wrinkled;
Knowing the spaces there
 With blood are sprinkled.
Why in the smoky sky
 Missed I the sad truth?
Why did I not die
 Young with the blood of youth?
Why did I not die
 Hot in the heat of noon?
Here must I sleep and lie
 Under a cool moon.
Here must I die aage,
 Pale in the pale light.
Cold in my icy age,
 Cold in the icy night.

THE BUSH-LOVER

HE lingers in the lazy grass
And talks of loneliness with trees.
The clouds pass, and the hours pass;
And far afield he hears the bees.

He sees the wistful moon arise;
He sits and stares, and clasps his knees.
The town cries, and the crowd cries,
'I'll stay with these,' he says, 'and these.'

MEMORIES

I SEE wild waves that break, and breaking run;
And the wild sea-birds wheeling round the ships;
But at the dawn, the coming of the sun,
I see your red, red lips.

I see the cold moon now with fresh delight;
And the stars arise anew, and yet arise;
But in the night, the blackness of the night,
I see your sad, sad eyes.

I hear the engines throbbing as we ride;
And the men's songs. I hear great throats
rejoice.
But in the silence, when all songs have died,
I hear your soft, soft voice.

Written on a troopship

THE RIVER

SWIFT with the dawn she rises, quick and cold,
Rattling the pebbles with her silver shoon;
Chasing a thousand fish of instant gold,
And racing into noon.

But in the night, so tired at having tracked
Her great sea-lover to his sounding lair;
Down from the shoulders of her cataract,
She loosens all her hair.

MEMORY

THE tangled twilight of your hair
Blew soft against my face.
Ah! we were young, and you were fair,
This was the time,
And this the place.

The river wound its way along
Beside yon almond tree;
And ever its evening song
It sang to you;
It sang to me.

To-night they told me you were dead,
And watched for me to weep.
'I'll sit beside this stream,' I said,
'I'll dream awhile,
And then—I'll sleep.'

MOCKERY

I MET my love a-weeping,
Weeping in the night-tide pale;
Her head among the lily bloom,
Weeping by an empty tomb—
An unshut tomb.

I gently stroked her golden hair
That shone so
With the moon-glow

In the sad-sweet air.

I like playful breezes from the south
Came soft smile-dimples to her mouth;
And when again she seemed to weep
I kissed her wild-wide eyes to sleep;
While there beyond the lily bloom
I saw the watching, waiting tomb.

I left my love a-sleeping,
Sleeping in the cypress vale;
Smiling sadly in the gloom;
Sleeping in the fastened tomb—
The tight-shut tomb.

How round the tomb the moving mists

Will twirl so
When the winds blow,
That the ivy twists
And shudders round the cold grey stone
A serpent on a crumbling throne.
While I, upon a near-by mound,
Hear salt tears soaking in the ground;
But there, whene'er the lilies bloom,
I hear low laughter in the tomb.

DEJECTION

POINT thy battered prow to the dark shore
Thou hoary son of Erebus, and dip thy blades
In the slow-moving marge, for I am of the
shades,

And I would see the mocking earth no more.

Welcome is to me that starless dome

That echoes of the dead, and the black Stygian
flood

That laps upon its strand like drowsy blood.

Oh, bear me slow to my Avernian home!

Oh, bear me with slow-metred melody,

And wield thine oars in tune to some Plutonian lay;

For I would be with shadows and forget the day

To roam the dark aisles with Persephone.

Guide me to the banks of some still stream

To pluck the frail narcissus buds where'er I may;

Or let me muse along some cypress-shaded way,

And ponder on the glories of a dream.

Then would I wander in those murky glades,

Where great neglected Pan doth hide his once-
sought horns,

And sleeps all poppy-decked among his slum-
bering fauns,

Or creeps with shut eyes through the sombre
shades.

With opiate blooms all fashioned garland-wise,
Would I, with solemn face and meekly bended
head,

Go forth alone to meet the world-forgotten dead
With twilight in my soul, and sleep within my eyes.

ACCEPTANCE

BESIDE the doors of a keen-lighted hall
I paused, and quite by chance
I noticed Love
Smiling and tall;
And then I heard the whirling dance,
And saw the dismal skies above.

She called to me to know her yet again,
And know her pale sad friend,
Solemn with tears;
Her friend was Pain.
I moved away, but in the end
Returned, fearing the empty years.

And I, who thought to scoff, and had so planned,
I took Love's fevered arm,
And felt Pain's breath.
I took Love's hand,
And kissed its shining palm,
And saw beyond the silent face of Death.

July, 1916

THE TRUE DAWN

GO, false dawn, that cometh as a child
With yellow curls!
Hast never known the wild
Unhallowed cry of night!
Go hence!
I did not wish for pearls
Of dimpled innocence
Upon this floor.
Go! Thy blinding light
But leaves the darkness deeper than before.

Go, false dawn, that cometh as a bride
In virgin white
And brimming eyes so wide
With trust, and void of fears!
Depart!
Thou hast not known the night!
Repose thy willing heart
At whiter stairs.
Go! Before thy tears
Bestain thy veil, and deepen these my cares.

Come, true dawn, that creepeth from the foul
Unclean abyss

With weary arms! Thy cowl
Is as the cowl of night.
Art here!
I feel thy tired kiss,
And feel each falling tear
Upon these sands.
Come! Thy glimmered light
Shall guide my eyes, and guide my trembling
hands.

August, 1916

THE SOUL FORSAKEN

HHEAD-BOWED I stood before the Gates of
God,

And pleaded starvingly;

The Great Eye would not see:

And cold with hopeless tears again I trod

The dreaded vast.

I felt the souls immortal moving past

All singingly.

Oh, pity me! Oh, pity me

Wandering eternally!

I moved among Olympic ways amon,

And looked with searching eye

Upon the mournful sky.

I lay and wept before the crumbled throne

Of Jove the dead.

I heard the soundless twilight, and I fled

With hopeless sigh.

Oh, pity me! Oh, pity me

Wandering eternally!

I strayed from peak to peak; from star to star;

And roamed in search of grace

Amid the fields of space;

I craved at barren pagan shrines of far
Antiquity:
But mouths were mute, and eyes refused to see
The asking face.
Oh, pity me! Oh, pity me
Wandering eternally!

I lay abreast above the chasm of Hell,
And claimed my destiny
Amid its demonry.
In vain I shrieked for entrance at the well
Of Sin.
I heard the Sobs and Sorrows rushing in
All moaningly.
Oh, pity me! Oh, pity me
Wandering eternally!

COLD!

COME not to me with loveliness
Across the crying hill;
For once I held thee pitiless.
Hast thou no pity still?

Come not to me with hot delight,
And touch this moveless clay,
Lest my poor heart that knows the night
Awake and feel the day.

Come not to me and kiss this head,
And heat me with thy fire;
For I am dead, and thou art dead;
And dead is my desire.

LOST!

A MOON upon a moonlit sea
To me thou art;
And every shining part
Of heaven belongs to thee;
And in my deepest dreams
Those little timid beams
Come down to me.

Art as a faintly perfumed flower
In perfumed glades;
And in the sombre shades
At every falling shower
Of rain, or shroud of dew,
Each broken, blistered willow knew
A fragrant power.

And yet thou art a woman too
No less than these;
Thou art by lands and seas
A woman that I knew.
And I would know thee more;
But now the lovely shore
Is lost to view.

THE HAWK

SWOOP! Swoop!
From dizzy skies thou swingest
To the singing earth.
To where unseen
Amid the green
Untimely death thou bringest -
To unseeing mirth.

Upon a dark crag, peering
Through half-eclipsèd eye,
An eye unkind,
Dost meet the wind
With lifted head all-hearing
In the algid sky.

What awful thought is sitting
In thy brain and breast,
That beats thy blood
With throbbing flood,
When linnets come night-flitting
To their night-tide nest?

'Neath wind-torn skies fast speeding
As the clouds above

Dost skim and sail
With wedge-wrought tail
'Mid fledglings sweetly pleading,
To departed love.

Where is that love low-lying
In a God-made thing
Of feathered form?
Is thy blood warm,
Thou bloody thing, swift-flying,
That canst never sing?

Swoop! Swoop!
From dizzy skies thou swingest
To the singing earth.
To where unseen
Amid the green
Untimely death thou bringest
To unseeing mirth.

RAPINE

SHE came from some still mossiness
Of quiet ways; and stood with modest hands;
A warmth of body in a shy distress;
A white shell on the sands.
A slender shell she seemed;
And he, the sea
That rose and gathered, beat and dreamed
And longed so restlessly.
She saw him not thus imminent, nor moved
Nor spoke. The hot sea swept;
And smothering her fears
It loosed and loved
And left her as she wept,
Wet with his clasp, and wet with all her tears.

Suggested by a Belgian tale



THE CHANGE

LAST year I heard the songs of birds,
And heard the trumpets of the bees.
I caught the winding river's words,
And clutched at leaves of trees.

I heard the gales upon the height;
And heard each frightened windy rush.
I lay within the sultry night,
Eaves-dropping in the bush.

But now I walk within a town,
And hear the slyness of its feet.
Great cruel things stride up and down
Within a shady street.

I see quick things with ugly nails,
And hear their low half-smothered cries.
I hear men tell strange trembling tales
With big beseeching eyes.

I do not hear the singing bough.
I hear soft murders in a lane.
I do not feel the bush-call, now
I feel my brother's pain.

THE AUSTRALIAN MUSE

UPLIFT thy lyre, and touch the tender strings;
But leave unsung the epics of thy land
Till thou and Time have made a song both grand
And mellow with thy long imaginings.
Breathe forth the secret whisperings of thy birth,
And play the soft tunes of thine infancy;
Nor sing the dull oft-told reality
Of worldly ways; but rather let the earth
Grow old; then sing the great songs of its youth.
Then thou, whilst ageing in the pass of time,
Add fame to fame, and rhyme to gloried rhyme
Till fit thy lyre is for the song of Truth.
But now, a child-song sweet with laughs and
tears,
And let the unripe ripen with the years.

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